



The Lincoln Kinsman

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Lincoln's Letters to His Wife

THIRTY-FOUR TELEGRAMS AND LETTERS WHICH REVEAL
LINCOLN'S TENDER REGARD FOR HIS FAMILY

Any letters or telegrams which Abraham Lincoln sent to his wife are of great importance to biographers of Abraham Lincoln, and it is to be regretted that only thirty-four such messages seem to be available. There must have been much correspondence which passed between them during the many years of their married life when Mr. Lincoln was traveling the circuit, but no such letters have been discovered.

In fact the only letters to his wife which have been made public are four pieces of correspondence written from Washington while Lincoln was in Congress. The other compilation of messages are telegrams which were sent to Mrs. Lincoln during the Presidential years.

Congressman Lincoln's Letters

The earliest letter written by Lincoln to his wife which has thus far been found is dated April 16, 1848, from Washington, although it is evident from the contents of the letter

that another letter had preceded it a week before.

On October 25, 1847, the Lincoln family, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln and their two children, Robert aged four and Edward aged nineteen months, rented their Springfield home and started for Washington where Mr. Lincoln was to take his seat as a member of Congress. On the way they stopped for a visit with Mrs. Lincoln's people at Lexington.

Upon reaching Washington Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln secured a room at Mrs. Sprigg's boarding-house where several other members of Congress had accommodations. As might be expected Mrs. Lincoln had some difficulty in adjusting herself and the children to the new environment. Arriving there about the first of December, Mrs. Lincoln was, of course, confined to the house with the two children, and apparently some of the other boarders did not feel very kindly toward her. She remained about four months, and in the spring she

went to Lexington, Kentucky, for a visit with her people. She was staying there when Lincoln wrote the four letters which follow:

Washington, April 16, 1848

Dear Mary:

In this troublesome world we are never quite satisfied. When you were here, I thought you hindered me some in attending to business; but now, having nothing but business—no vanity—it has grown exceedingly tasteless to me. I hate to sit down and direct documents, and I hate to stay in this old room by myself.

You know I told you in last Sunday's letter I was going to make a little speech during the week, but the week passed away without my getting a chance to do so, and now my interest in the subject has passed away too. Your second and third letters have been received since I wrote before. Dear Eddy thinks father is "gone tapila."

Has any further discovery been made as to the breaking into your grandmother's house? If I were she I would not remain there alone. You mention that your uncle John Parker is likely to be at Lexington. Don't forget to present him my very kindest regards.

I went yesterday to hunt the little plaid stockings, as you wished, but found that McKnight has quit business and Allen had not a single pair of the description you give and only one plaid pair of any sort that I thought would fit "Eddy's dear little feet." I have a notion to make another trial to-morrow morning. If I could get them, I have an excellent chance of sending them. Mr. Warrich Tunstoll of St. Louis is here. He is to leave early this week and to go by

Lexington. He says he knows you, and will call to see you, and he voluntarily asked if I had not some package to send to you.

I wish you to enjoy yourself in every possible way, but is there no danger of wounding the feelings of your good father by being so openly intimate with the Wickliffe family?

Mrs. Broome has not removed yet, but she thinks of doing so to-morrow. All the house or rather all with whom you were on decided good terms send their love to you. The others say nothing. Very soon after you went away I got what I think a very pretty set of shirt-bosom studs—modest little ones, jet set in gold, only costing 50 cents apiece, or \$1.50 for the whole.

Suppose you do not prefix the "Hon." to the address on your letters to me any more. I like the letters very much, but I would rather they should not have that upon them. It is not necessary as I suppose you have thought to have them come free.

And you are entirely free from headache? That is good—good considering it is the first spring you have been free from it since we were acquainted. I am afraid you will get so well and fat and young as to be wanting to marry again. Tell Louisa I want her to watch you a little for me. Get weighed and write me how much you weigh.

I did not get rid of the impression of that foolish dream about dear Bobby till I got your letter written the same day. What did he and Eddy think of the little letters father sent them? Don't let the blessed fellows forget father.

A day or two ago Mr. Strong, here in Congress, said to me that Matilda

would visit here within two or three weeks. Suppose you write her a letter, and inclose it in one of mine, and if she comes I will deliver it to her, and if she does not, I will send it to her.

Most Affectionately,
A. Lincoln.

Washington, May 24, 1848

My dear Wife:

Enclosed is the draft as I promised you in my letter of Sunday. It is drawn in favor of your father, and I doubt not, he will give you the money for it at once. I write this letter in the postoffice, surrounded by men and noise, which, together with the fact that there is nothing new makes me write so short a letter.

Affectionately
A. Lincoln.

Washington, June 12, 1848

My dear Wife:

On my return from Philadelphia yesterday, where in my anxiety I have been led to attend the Whig Convention I found your last letter. I was so tired and sleepy, having ridden all night, that I could not answer it till to-day; and now I have to do so in the H. R. The leading matter in your letter is your wish to return to this side of the Mountains—Will you be a *good girl* in all things, if I consent? Then come along, and that as *soon* as possible. Having got the idea in my head, I shall be impatient till I see you. You will not have money enough to bring you, but I presume your uncle will supply you and I will refund him here. By the way you do not mention whether you have received the fifty dollars I sent you. I do not much fear but that you got it;

because the want of it would have induced you say something in relation to it. If your uncle is already at Lexington, you might induce him to start in earlier than the first of July; he could stay in Kentucky longer on his return, and so make up for lost time. Since I began this letter, the H. R. has passed a resolution for adjourning on the 17th July, which probably will pass the Senate. I hope this letter will not be disagreeable to you; which, together with the circumstances under which I write, I hope will excuse me for not writing a longer one. Come on just as soon as you can—I want to see you, and our dear *dear* boys very much. Everybody here wants to see our dear Bobby.

Affectionately,
A. Lincoln.

Washington, July 2, 1848

My dear Wife:

Your letter of last sunday came last night. On that day (sunday) I wrote the principal part of a letter to you, but did not finish it, or send it till tuesday, when I had provided a draft for \$100 which I sent in it. It is now probable that on that day (tuesday) you started to Shelbyville; so that when the money reaches Lexington, you will not be there. Before leaving, did you make any provision about letters that might come to Lexington for you? Write me whether you got the draft, if you shall not have already done so, when this reaches you. Give my kindest regards to your uncle John, and all the family. Thinking of them reminds me that I saw your acquaintance, Newton, of Arkansas, at the Philadelphia Convention. We had but a single interview, and that was so brief, and in so great a multi-

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SUBJECTS DISCUSSED IN FORMER ISSUES
OF THE LINCOLN KINSMAN

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tude of strange faces, that I am quite sure I should not recognize him, if I were to meet him again. He was a sort of Trinity, three in one, having the right, in his own person, to cast the three votes of Arkansas. Two or three days ago I sent your uncle John, and a few of our other friends each a copy of the speech I mentioned in my last letter; but I did not send any to you, thinking you would be on the road here, before it would reach you. I send you one now. Last Wednesday, P. H. Hood & Co. dunned me for a little bill of \$5.38 cents, and Walter Harper & Co. another for \$8.50 cents, for goods which they say you bought. I hesitated to pay them, because my recollection is that you told me when you went away, there was nothing left unpaid. Mention in your next letter whether they are right. Mrs. Richardson is still here; and what is more, has a baby—so Richardson says, and he ought to know. I believe Mary

Hewett has left here and gone to Boston. I met her on the street about fifteen or twenty days ago, and she told me she was going soon. I have seen nothing of her since.

The music in the Capitol grounds on Saturdays, or, rather, the interest in it, is dwindling down to nothing. Yesterday evening the attendance was rather thin. Our two girls, whom you remember seeing first at Canisis, at the exhibition of the Ethiopian Serenaders, and whose peculiarities were the wearing of black fur bonnets, and never being seen in close company with other ladies, were at the music yesterday. One of them was attended by their brother, and the other had a member of Congress in tow. He went home with her; and if I were to guess, I would say, he went away a somewhat altered man—most likely in his pockets, and in some other particular. The fellow looked conscious of guilt, although I believe he was unconscious that everybody around knew who it was that had caught him.

I have had no letter from home, since I wrote you before, except short business letters, which have no interest for you.

By the way, you do not intend to do without a girl, because the one you had has left you? Get another as soon as you can to take charge of the dear codgers. Father expected to see you all sooner; but let it pass; stay as long as you please, and come when you please. Kiss and love the dear rascals.

Affectionately,
A. Lincoln.

President Lincoln's Telegrams

After the death of Willie Lincoln in the White House on February 20,

1862, Mrs. Lincoln became a mentally disturbed woman, having lost another son, Edward, twelve years before, so she often sought relief in short trips to see Robert Lincoln at Boston or to visit New York or Philadelphia. These visits were responsible for several telegrams which the President sent his wife.

A trip to Boston was made in November 1862 and another to Philadelphia in December of the same year. There seems to have been an extended visit at the Continental House, Philadelphia, in June 1863, at which time her son Tad was with her. This visit was undoubtedly due to the military operations near Washington which apparently disturbed her.

Later in the summer, probably to escape the intense heat of Washington, Mrs. Lincoln took a trip to New England, and it seems as if both of her sons were with her at this time. From Mr. Lincoln's dispatch it would appear that an epidemic of sickness may have been responsible for another visit to New York in the fall of the year. She was making the Fifth Avenue House her headquarters and Tad was with her.

On the next visit to New York in December Mrs. Lincoln was registered at the Metropolitan Hotel where she remained four days. This time Tad stayed with his father.

In January 1864 Mrs. Lincoln and Tad made a trip to Philadelphia, staying at the Continental Hotel for a few days. In the summer they went to Manchester, Vermont, a place they had visited the summer before.

The last message we have been able to discover from Mr. Lincoln to his wife was from City Point, Virginia, where he and Tad had gone to visit General Grant. This telegram was sent April 2, 1865.

Washington, Nov. 9, 1862.
Mrs. A. Lincoln, Boston, Mass.

Mrs. Cuthbert and Aunt Mary want to move to the White House because it has grown so cold at Soldiers' Home. Shall they?

A. Lincoln.

Executive Mansion, Washington,
June 9, 1863.
Mrs. Lincoln, Philadelphia, Pa.:

Think you had better put "Tad's" pistol away. I had an ugly dream about him.

A. Lincoln.

Executive Mansion, Washington,
June 11, 1863.
Mrs. Lincoln, Philadelphia:

Your three dispatches received. I am very well and am glad to know that you and "Tad" are so.

A. Lincoln.

War Department, June 15, 1863.
Mrs. Lincoln, Philadelphia, Pa.:

Tolerably well. Have not rode out much yet, but have at last got new tires on the carriage wheels and perhaps shall ride out soon.

A. Lincoln.

War Department, Washington City,
D. C., June 16, 1863.
Mrs. Lincoln, Philadelphia:

It is a matter of choice with yourself whether you come home. There is no reason why you should not, that

did not exist when you went away. As bearing on the question of your coming home, I do not think the raid into Pennsylvania amounts to anything at all.

A. Lincoln.

New York, July 28, 1863.

Mrs. A. Lincoln, New York:

Bob went to Fort Monroe and only got back to-day. Will start to you at 11 a. m. to-morrow. All well.

A. Lincoln.

Executive Mansion, Washington,
August 8, 1863.

My dear Wife:

All as well as usual, and no particular trouble anyway. I put the money into the Treasury at five per cent, with the privilege of withdrawing it any time upon thirty days' notice. I suppose you are glad to learn this. Tell dear Tad poor "Nanny Goat" is lost, and Mrs. Cuthbert and I are in distress about it. The day you left, Nanny was found resting herself and chewing her little cud on the middle of Tad's bed; but now she's gone! The gardener kept complaining that she destroyed the flowers, till it was concluded to bring her down to the White House. This was done, and the second day she had disappeared and has not been heard of since. This is the last we know of poor "Nanny."

The weather continues dry and excessively warm here. Nothing very important occurring. The election in Kentucky has gone very strongly right. Old Mr. Wickliffe got ugly, as you know: ran for governor, and is terribly beaten. Upon Mr. Crittenden's death, Brutus Clay, Cassius's brother, was put on the track for Congress,

and is largely elected. Mr. Menzies, who, as we thought, behaved very badly last session of Congress, is largely beaten in the district opposite Cincinnati, by Green Clay Smith, Cassius Clay's nephew. But enough.

Affectionately,
A. Lincoln.

Executive Mansion, Washington, D. C.,
August 29, 1863.

Mrs. A. Lincoln, Manchester, Vt.:

All quite well. Fort Sumter is *certainly* battered down and useless to the enemy, and it is *believed* here, but not entirely certain, that both Sumter and Fort Wagner are occupied by our forces. It is also certain that General Gilmore has thrown some shot into the city of Charleston.

A. Lincoln.

War Department, Washington, D. C.,
September 6, 1863.

Mrs. A. Lincoln, Manchester, Vt.:

All well and no news except that General Burnside has Knoxville, Tenn.

A. Lincoln.

War Department, Washington, D. C.,
September 20, 1863.

Mrs. A. Lincoln, New York:

I neither see nor hear anything of sickness here now, though there may be much without my knowing it. I wish you to stay or come just as is most agreeable to yourself.

A. Lincoln.

War Department, Washington, D. C.,
September 21, 1863.

Mrs. A. Lincoln, Fifth Avenue Hotel,
New York:

The air is so clear and cool and apparently healthy that I would be

glad for you to come. Nothing very particular, but I would be glad to see you and Tad.

A. Lincoln.

Executive Mansion, Washington,
September 22, 1863.

Mrs. A. Lincoln, Fifth Avenue Hotel,
New York:

Did you receive my dispatch of yesterday? Mrs. Cuthbert did not correctly understand me. I directed her to tell you to use your own pleasure whether to stay or come, and I did not say it is sickly and that you should on no account come. So far as I see or know, it was never healthier, and I really wish to see you. Answer this on receipt.

A. Lincoln.

War Department, September 24, 1863.

Mrs. A. Lincoln, Fifth Avenue Hotel,
New York:

We now have a tolerably accurate summing up of the late battle between Rosecrans and Bragg. The result is that we are worsted, if at all, only in the fact that we, after the main fighting was over, yielded the ground, thus leaving considerable of our artillery and wounded to fall into the enemy's hands, for which we got nothing in turn. We lost in general officers one killed and three or four wounded, all brigadiers, while, according to the rebel accounts which we have, they lost six killed and eight wounded; of the killed one major-general and five brigadiers, including your brother-in-law, Helm; and of the wounded three major-generals and five brigadiers. This list may be reduced two in number by corrections of confusion in names. At 11.40 A. M. yesterday General Rosecrans telegraphed from

Chattanooga: "We hold this point, and I cannot be dislodged except by very superior numbers and after a great battle." A dispatch leaving there after night yesterday says: "No fight to-day."

A. Lincoln.

Executive Mansion, Washington,
December 4, 1863—9 1-2 A. M.

Mrs. A. Lincoln, Metropolitan,
New York:

All going well.

A. Lincoln.

Executive Mansion, Washington,
December 5, 1863—10 A. M.

Mrs. A. Lincoln, Metropolitan Hotel,
New York:

All doing well.

A. Lincoln.

Executive Mansion, Washington, D.C.,
December 6, 1863.

Mrs. A. Lincoln, Metropolitan Hotel,
New York:

All doing well.

A. Lincoln.

Executive Mansion, Washington,
December 7, 1863—10.20 A. M.

Mrs. A. Lincoln, Metropolitan Hotel,
New York:

All doing well. Tad confidently expects you to-night. When will you come?

A. Lincoln.

Executive Mansion, Washington,
December 7, 1863—7 P. M.

Mrs. A. Lincoln, Metropolitan Hotel,
New York:

Tad has received his book. The carriage shall be ready at 6 p. m. to-morrow.

A. Lincoln.

War Department, Washington, D. C.,
January 5, 1864

Mrs. Lincoln, Continental Hotel,
Philadelphia, Pa.:

All very well.

A. Lincoln.

Executive Mansion, Washington,
January 7, 1864.

Mrs. A. Lincoln, Philadelphia, Pa.:

We are all well and have not been
otherwise.

A. Lincoln.

Executive Mansion, Washington,
April 28, 1864.

Mrs. A. Lincoln, Metropolitan Hotel,
New York:

The draft will go to you. Tell Tad
the goats and father are very well,
especially the goats.

A. Lincoln.

War Department, June 19, 1864.
Mrs. A. Lincoln, New York:

Tad arrived safely and all well.

A. Lincoln.

Executive Mansion, Washington,
June 24, 1864.

Mrs. A. Lincoln,
Boston, Massachusetts:

All well and very warm. Tad and I
have been to General Grant's army.
Returned yesterday safe and sound.

A. Lincoln.

Washington, D. C., June 29, 1864.
Mrs. A. Lincoln, New York:

All well. Tom is moving things out.

A. Lincoln.

Washington, D. C., August 31, 1864.

Mrs. A. Lincoln,
Manchester, Vermont:

All reasonably well. Bob not here
yet. How is dear Tad?

A. Lincoln.

Executive Mansion, Washington,
September 8, 1864.

Mrs. A. Lincoln,
Manchester, Vermont:

All well, including Tad's pony and
the goats. Mrs. Colonel Dimmick died
night before last. Bob left Sunday af-
ternoon. Said he did not know whether
he should see you.

A. Lincoln.

War Department, September 11, 1864.
Mrs. A. Lincoln, New York:

All well. What day will you be
home? Four days ago sent dispatch
to Manchester, Vt., for you.

A. Lincoln.

Washington, Dec. 21, 1864.
Mrs. A. Lincoln, Continental Hotel,
[Philadelphia]:

Do not come on the night train.
It is too cold. Come in the morning.

A. Lincoln.

City Point, Va., April 2, 1865.
Mrs. Lincoln:

At 4.30 p. m. to-day General Grant
telegraphs that he has Petersburg
completely enveloped from river be-
low to river above, and has captured
since he started last Wednesday, about
12,000 prisoners and 50 guns. He sug-
gests that I shall go out and see him
in the morning, which I think I will
do. Tad and I are both well, and will
be glad to see you and your party here
at the time you name.

A. Lincoln.